POLS 2102: American State and Local Politics

Department of Political Science

Spring 2017

R 5:30-8:00 pm (Anderson 4)

Professor: Anthony J. Del Signore (delsignore.an@temple.edu)

Office: 431 Gladfelter Hall

Office Hours: (Monday 12:30 – 2:30 and by appointment)

Course Description and Objectives

This course is an investigation of major problems and issues in American State Politics. The emphasis is on political institutions and organizations, political behavior in state politics and the impact of state politics on policymaking at the national, state, and local levels. Federalism in America allows the states to act as Laboratories of Democracy to tailor policy for their state’s unique needs. As a result, state and local government create a patchwork of public policy that serve as a testing ground for some of our most important policy innovations. This course seeks to understand how state politics operates and influences the development of public policy. It focuses on political institutions, and political behavior to explain politics and policy outcomes. State politics is an exciting field of study. While most states look and function similar to federal government, there are differences across the states that can dramatically alter the power dynamics of political actors, such as powers given to the governor, the strength of political parties within states, and whether or not judges are elected. This course takes advantage of the variation across the states to understand how political institutions influence politics and public policy.

Primary Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the ways in which political institutions can vary across the states, and how this influences state politics.
2. Develop a solid foundation of how state governments operate and influences their lives.
3. Use the comparative method to think critically about how politics functions across the United States.

Required Text:

I do not require students to go out and purchase textbooks as they put undue financial burdens upon the students. You are more than welcome to purchase these books, but all necessary reading selections will either be on Blackboard under Ares Course Reserves or on Blackboard in the folder of the corresponding week.
Class Participation/Attendance

Students are expected to do the readings, attend class and participate in class discussions. My lectures will be organized around the topics and readings found in the schedule outlined below. Lectures will include interactive discussion of the core themes of the readings. Students should read the assigned literature before class in order to participate. You are encouraged to raise your hand, ask questions, and clarify content at any point in class.

Mock Debates

This course will have a series of debates throughout the semester (4 debates total with between 5 to 7 participants in each debate) where students will assume the roles of policy experts, legislators, or social movement leaders and debate the pros and cons of a particular policy position. Participants are placed into teams and expected to arrive on debate day with detailed notes which they will hand in at the end of class. Those not participating are expected to arrive with at least TWO thought out debate questions.

Each student is expected to contribute in some fashion to each debate. Meaningful contributions to each debate and your debate prep notes/debate questions are worth 5% of your total grade for each debate (for a grand total of 20%).

Short Essays – Policy Proposals

Each student is required to produce TWO policy proposals (3 to 4 pages) BEFORE MIDTERM WEEK. For each essay, I ask that you pick a week’s worth of reading (from Weeks 2 through 8), and argue for a particular policy proposal from the perspective of a political actor. For example, you could assume the role of a progressive reformer and argue for an electoral or economic reform. You could assume the role of a party machine boss and argue against civil service reform. Or you could assume the role of a leader of a social movement and argue from your position.

Final Paper

Each student is expected to submit a 10 to 12 page final research project on a topic, issue, or election that has ramifications for local and/or state politics. This is an open-ended project so it is vital that you start thinking about it early and coming to me sooner rather than later if you need help. As you will notice below, I break up the due dates for each section of the final paper so that you can easily finish at least 10 pages and not have to rush to finish.

Examples of topics:
Research a state judicial ruling
Research a 2016 local or state election outcome
Research an organization in Philadelphia/NYC trying to enact policy reform
Among many others

**Summary of Grading**

Attendance and Discussion 20%
Short Essays 30% (15% for each)
Debates 20%
Final Paper 30%

**Course Grades**

Final grades will be assigned based on the scale below:

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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% - 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>70% - 75.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>88% - 89.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>68% - 69.9%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>86% - 87.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>66% - 67.9%</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% - 85.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>60% - 65.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>78% - 79.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>59.9% or less</td>
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<td>76% - 77.9%</td>
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Unless a computational error has been made, grades will not be changed after the end of the semester. Only in the rarest of circumstances will I grant an Incomplete (‘I’).

**Academic Dishonesty**

For Temple University’s honesty policy regarding cheating and use of copyrighted materials, see: http://bulletin.temple.edu/undergraduate/about-temple-university/studentresponsibilities/#academichonesty

Academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Temple University is committed to providing students with access to its facilities and the technology and information they need to succeed in and out of the classroom, and that these resources are accessible in accordance with applicable law. Students who need accommodations
for coursework should contact Disability Resources and Services (http://disabilityresources.temple.edu/).

**Counseling and Student Health**

Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at Temple University’s Tuttleman Counseling Services, (215) 204-7276, or Psychological Services Center, (215) 204-7100. Visit their web sites for more information: http://counseling.temple.edu/ or http://sites.temple.edu/psc/.

*Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:*

*Einstein Crisis Response Center (CRC):* (215) 951-8300.

**Course Schedule (All Readings are to be completed before class starts)**

**Week 1: Introduction to State Politics (Thursday, Jan 19)**

**Readings:** “Making Law in Pennsylvania”
http://www.pacapitol.com/Resources/PDF/Making-Law-In-PA.pdf

“Welcome to the Senate of Pennsylvania”

“Yogurt Gaba Gaba”
http://www.cc.com/video-clips/l4jw0z/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-yogurt-gabba-gabba

**Week 2: Why Federalism? (Thursday, Jan 26)**

**Readings:** Donovan, et. al. Chapter 2

Federalist No. 39


**Week 3: Machine Politics (Thursday, Feb 2)**

**Readings:** McGovern Ed. Urban Politics
Week 4: Progressive Reforms: Then and Now (Thursday, Feb 9)

Readings: McGovern Ed. Urban Politics

- Chapter 4 Introduction: p. 83 – 85


Debate #1: Are national and state governments in need of a new era of Progressive Reforms? What, if any, reforms should we consider to ensure our elected officials represent everyone?

Week 5: Political Parties (Thursday, Feb 16)

Readings: Donovan et al. Chapter 5 (Skip the section on open and closed primaries)


DUE: Have an idea for your final paper topic and be prepared to share it in class. It must be approved by me before the end of the day.
Week 6: Interest Groups/Social Movements (Thursday, Feb 23)

Readings: Donovan et al. Chapter 6

McGovern Ed. Urban Politics

- Chapter 10 – Intro p. 339 – 341


Debate #2: Each participant is placed into one of two groups – social movement leaders or elected officials. Come to some sort of agreement concerning a particular social policy issue that satisfies all participants.

Week 7: Campaigning: Mobilization and Media (Thursday, Mar 2)


Week 8: Money in Politics (Thursday, Mar 9)


DUE: Please hand in an annotated bibliography of between 6 and 8 sources.

DUE: By this point, both of your Midterm Policy Papers should be handed in. Otherwise, they are zeros.
Spring Break --- No Class (Thursday, Mar 16)

Week 9: State Legislature (Thursday, Mar 23)

**Readings:** Donovan, et al. Chapter 7


State Legislatures and ALEC: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver

**Debate #3:** Each participant will play the role of either a majority or minority member of our hypothetical legislature. Our goal, by the end of the session, is to pass a bill on gun safety that satisfies all members of the legislature.

Week 10: How Legislators Decide (Thursday, Mar 30)

**Readings:** Feldman, *Tales from the Sausage Factory*, Chapters 1 and 2

**DUE:** 3 to 4 page Literature Review

Week 11: Public Policy I: Criminal Justice (Thursday, Apr 6)

**Readings:** Feldman, *Tales from the Sausage Factory*, Chapter 7, p. 173 – 201


Week 12: Public Policy II: Morality Policy (Thursday, Apr 13)


**Debate #4:** What role should the government have in “legislating morality?”
Week 13: Public Opinion (Thursday, Apr 20)

Readings:


DUE: 3 to 4 page Data Analysis

Week 14: The Courts (Thursday, Apr 27)

Readings: Donovan et al. Chapter 9

Feldman, Tales from the Sausage Factory, Chapter 8, p. 203 - 239

DUE: Final Paper submitted via Blackboard – May 4th 11:59 pm